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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-ROK FREE TRADE AGREEMENT, CHINA-JAPAN
RELATIONS

11. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies continued to focus news coverage April 11 on the dispute between the Executive Yuan and the National Communications Council; on the 2008 presidential elections; and on other local political issues. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a column in the pro-status quo "China Times" discussed the U.S.-ROK Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and the potential China-ROK FTA. The article said China is eager to sign an FTA with Seoul because it wants to interrupt the joint counterbalance formed by the United States and South Korea. An op-ed piece in the limited-circulation, pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times," on the other hand, commented on Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao's visit to Japan. The article said "Asia's peace, stability and prosperity hinge on whether the two powers can manage to live together and lead the region into the 21st century." End summary,

12. U.S.-ROK Free Trade Agreement

"Connection between the U.S.-ROK Free Trade Agreement and China-ROK Free Trade Agreement"

The "International Outlook" column in the pro-status quo "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] noted (4/11):

"The United States and South Korea signed a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and, besides economic objectives, the political objectives [behind such a move] are very obvious as well. China is also eager to push for signing an FTA with South Korea, with even more obvious political purposes. If the United States intends to counterbalance China by strengthening the U.S.-ROK relations, Beijing's plan to fortify relations with Seoul will naturally be aimed at interrupting the joint counterbalance by the United States and South Korea. ..."

13. China-Japan Relations

"Hopes Rise for China, Japan Thaw"

Jing-dong Yuan, director of the education program at the Center for Nonproliferation Studies and an associate professor of international policy studies at the Monterey Institute of International Studies in California, opined in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] (4/11):

"Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao will pay a visit to Japan this week. Five years after the last Sino-Japanese summit, Wen's visit brings with it high hopes for a thaw in bilateral relations. ... Wen's visit comes at a critical juncture in East Asian international relations -- never before have China and Japan both achieved prominence at the same time. ... One of the most sensitive issues in the relationship -- as Beijing sees it -- is related to the growing ties between Taipei and Tokyo. For the most part, the Japanese government did so by keeping ties between Tokyo and Taipei

unofficial and low profile. However, three trends have emerged to challenge the stability of the relationship.

"First, Taiwan has evolved from a KMT-controlled authoritarian state to an emerging democracy. As a result, there is growing affinity between Taiwan and Japan. Second, China's 1995 and 1996 missile exercises in the Taiwan Strait raised the specter that Beijing could resort to the use of force to resolve the Taiwan issue. Because of Taiwan's strategic location along sea routes used by Japan, Tokyo has become more attentive to the cross-strait development. Third, economic transformation in eastern Asia and growing economic interdependence has promoted greater economic ties as Japanese companies seek to capitalize on Taiwanese business links to China. ...

"Beijing has plenty of reasons to be worried about the growing Tokyo-Taipei ties. ... But what is encouraging is that at least Beijing and Tokyo can explore ways to best manage these disputes, even if they are unable to resolve them. ... Asia's peace, stability and prosperity hinge on whether the two powers can manage to live together and lead the region into the 21st century. Wen's visit should keep the momentum going."

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